

THE “PEDAGOGIC” DIDACTIC RESORT ... BETWEEN IDEALISM AND PRAGMATISM

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ABSTRACT

“ Ștefan Velovan” National Pedagogic College has been one of the Romanian educational institutions with tradition and vocation since 1870, when it was founded by the great politician Gheorghe Chitu, mayor of Craiova, minister of Instruction, Internal Affairs, Finances and Justice, member of the Romanian Academy and representative of the 1848 Revolution. Gheorghe Chitu is also known to have founded the Normal School from Craiova on March 7, 1870.

Our institution has an area of about 5 ha, where there is a more than one hundred year-old park, buildings that date from the end of the 19th century and last but not least, a didactic resort we have called “Pedagogic”, with an area of 1 ha, situated in the Eastern part of the property.

By 1990 there had been a tradition related to the harvesting of vegetables in this area. In 2013, 23 years after giving up this project, we decided that it was time for the rebirth of the “Pedagogic” didactic resort by completely restoring two greenhouses and by planting over 1.300 trees, out of which 300 are breeding trees that produce apples, plums, apricots, nectarines, pears, nuts. A few months after its founding, the greenhouses produced more than 1.000kg organic vegetables (tomatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, eggplants). 150 students serve these vegetables every day at the school canteen.

Prof.dr. Gabriel Corneanu., member of the Academy of Sciences from New York, university prof. dr. Marin Soare, the dean of the Faculty of Agronomy from Craiova, university prof. dr. Mihaela Corneanu, USAMVB from Timisoara, lect. Univ. dr. Ciobanu Ion and Conf.univ.dr. Constantin Nețoiu Our have been our mentors in this initiative.

We plan to develop the didactic resort of our institution and become autonomous in producing organic fruits and vegetables.

INTRODUCTION

Colegiul National Pedagogic Ștefan Velovan from Craiova is one of the Romanian schools with tradition, founded in 1870 by Gheorghe Chițu, an illustrious politician, visionary mayor of Craiova, Minister of Justice and member of the Romanian Academy.

This institution is located in Craiova, in the Northwest with an area of about 5 ha, being among the first schools in the county and even of the region in terms of surface. In the courtyard of our college there is a more than one century-old park that stretches like an arch attached to the old buildings of the nineteenth century.

Genesis of the "Pedagogic" Didactic Resort

Before 1990 there was a teaching farm where specialist teachers and especially the students worked, practicing under the guidance of Professor Constantin Dănescu with the endorsement of distinguished managers like Mr. Tascau Vasile, Mr. Drăgoescu Cornelius and Mr. Bărbulescu Ovidiu. After 1989 this teaching farm entered in ruins for reasons related to the Romanian mentality during the post-December regime.



Fig.1. Land preparation for planting fruit trees

We realized that the Didactic resort project, which had been abandoned for almost 25 years, deserves attention because it can provide a new mental approach to a society that has to be reborn after a period of "sleep" (confusion?) and, at the same, this project can provide economic autonomy worthy of consideration.

The land reserved for the Didactic Resort "Pedagogic" covers an area of about 1 ha in the Eastern part of the College. This area was abandoned for so many years that it had to go through several steps in order to build this resort, administratively important to the educational process, too. Thus, the wild weeds were completely removed but the strong roots still remained in the soil. Therefore, we suggested having these roots removed with a machine which went 1 meter deep in the ground. After the roots were removed, there followed the leveling and compacting of the ground as there were major differences in level (about 1.5 m-2 m between the north and the south of the land). After compacting and leveling was done we moved on to the next stage which consisted of plowing the surface.

This project aims at planting fruit trees of graft, which has now been done, of the following varieties: apple, plum, cherry, sour cherry, apricot, pear, nectarine, walnut, representing 300 trees planted. We met basic standards of planting, taking into account the protection of the tree raising, so we planted according to the 4m/4m system but for the nut trees, as they have a larger circumference of the crown, we thought it would be necessary to make its planting over a minimum area of 6m/6m.

The nut trees were planted in the North, where there is more shadow, as these trees enjoy this ecosystem. The number of nut trees is about 50 of the 300 trees planted so far.

We also made sure that the rows of fruit trees retain their varietal identity, that the row of trees, apple, cherry, pear, apricot, stretch over the entire length of the surface, avoiding intercropping the varieties. The planting was done in November 2013, which brought us a very high percentage of clamping the fruit trees (about 95%), this was also due to exceptional weather conditions for planting trees because during the spring-summer of 2014 it rained almost every week 15-20 l/m². The only variety that caused us some problems was the nectarine which, as it is known, is more demanding in terms of soil types around Craiova.



Fig.2. Restoration of abandoned greenhouses

After having accomplished this major goal of the Didactic Resort "Pedagogic", we went on to restore all the greenhouses that had been abandoned before 1990. Thus, we wanted to approach two typologies. One of the group of greenhouses is built on the ground surface, approximately 100 m^2 , and the other group has about the same surface of 100 m^2 .

Our aim was to bring manure or garden soil as well as soil from our own park, laden with specific nutrients to produce good crops in the greenhouse.

We should mention that our Teaching resort aims at being an eco-resort, using only natural substances, rejecting all the chemicals that, despite their higher efficiency in terms of production, are known, according to research, to be harmful to our health, especially if consumed frequently.



Fig. 3. Variety of bio-cans obtained in year 2014

Our students, a number of about 150 (100 students in the boarding school and about 50 that attend the after school program, highly appreciated lately especially due to this teaching project) primarily benefit by these products.

In the two modules of the greenhouses there were planted 300 seedlings of tomatoes, 300 peppers, 100 eggplant, zucchini 100, 100 beans, which means that at the end of the season, in September, we were able to collect over 1000 kg of organic vegetables, from which we made cans in order to meet the needs of our school canteen, receiving the notice of the ANSV of the Dolj County.

Cultivating vegetable species and fruit trees was made possible by the work done towards this purpose.



Fig. 4. Pedagogic Didactic Resort-after restoration

The accomplishment of the Didactic Resort 'Pedagogic' (The Teacher) has been locally and nationally appreciated, being offered as an example in national shows of specialty, pleading to eat healthy and be able to manage by yourself, without the need for high costs in achieving this objective. I should mention that this teaching resort, with a total of 300 fruit trees and 1.000 forest trees planted and two groups of greenhouses, cost us less than 10.000 lei. This money resulted entirely from sponsorship coming from individuals and businesses that offered their support to our project. In literature, there are no references about the existence or the functioning of any kinds of Annexes like the Teaching resort units, around any pedagogical colleges (Mogonea, 2010).

We note that in this work there were also planted 1.000 forest trees in the park that surrounds our institution. We have noticed that the trees which are more than a century years old, are falling under decline, like the elderly who tell their stories, rejuvenating this park that we enjoy every day.



Fig. 5. Planting 1.000 forest trees with our partners from Winchester College within the project "Plant a Tree for Your Future"

In the southern area of the College there were planted fir trees (200 pieces of seedlings) and in the West and North (800 seedlings) the following species: oak, beech, manna tree, Tartar maple, locust, poplar. We started the planting campaign in the fall of 2013 and it was successfully continued in the spring of 2014, with a 95% of seedlings attaching.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout our work on the establishment of the "Pedagogic" Teaching Resort we benefited from the advice offered by prof. univ. dr. Marin Soare, the dean of the Faculty of Agronomy and Horticulture from Craiova, prof. univ. dr. Gabriel Corneanu, member of the Academy of Sciences in New York, prof. univ. dr. Mihaela Corneanu USAMVB from Timișoara, conf. univ. dr. Constantin Nețoiu and lect. univ. dr. Ciobanulon. Following a protocol between Colegiul National Pedagogic "Stefan Velovan" and the Faculty

of Agronomy and Horticulture, University of Craiova, we agreed that the students from the Faculty of Agronomy and Horticulture will conduct practice at the "Pedagogic" Didactic Resort, a decision that honors and, at the same time, gives us responsibilities.

We aim at increasing the number of fruit trees to a number of 400 and plant 100 cuttings of table wine varieties by the fall of 2014, for our students along with the organic green vegetables and fresh fruit. Beside this concept on the establishment of two groups of greenhouses and planting 1.300 trees, out of which 300 are fruit trees, we believe that the 'Pedagogic' Didactic Resort can expand and diversify in the future, also having in plan activities related to the livestock area.

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